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## The Development Of The Negro Chamber Of Commerce Movement In Texas

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEGRO CHAMBER  
OF COMMERCE MOVEMENT IN TEXAS

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEGRO CHAMBER  
OF COMMERCE MOVEMENT IN TEXAS

BY

Reby Cary

Prairie View A. & M. College Studies in History

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of Commerce Movement in Texas"

Master of Science

In the

Division of Arts and Sciences

of

Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College

Prairie View, Texas

August, 1943

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEGRO CHAMBER  
OF COMMERCE MOVEMENT IN TEXAS

APPROVED BY:

By

Reby Cary

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirement for the Degree of

Master of Science

in the

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of

Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College

Prairie View, Texas

August, 1948



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The writer is very grateful to Dr. George R. Woolfolk for his suggestions, criticisms, and supervision of this study; and to Dr. Henry A. Bullock for his helpful information.

and Mrs. E. Cary, who have been my guiding light throughout the years.

## BIOGRAPHY

The writer, Asby Cary, was born September 9, 1930 to Mr. and Mrs. S. Cary of Ft. Worth, Texas.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Nadine Cary, who has inspired me in this study, and to my father and mother, Rev. and Mrs. S. Cary, who have been my guiding light throughout the years.

His elementary education was received from the James S. Quinn Elementary School, Ft. Worth, Texas, and was completed in 1947. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in History in 1941, and enrolled in the graduate school of that institution in September, 1941.

On June, 1942, the writer volunteered for service in the United States Coast Guard and was discharged after three and one half years of service.

At the present his position is Director of Teacher- Personnel at the McDonald College of Industrial Arts, Ft. Worth, Texas.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Acknowledgments ..... 111

Dedication ..... 12

Biography ..... 13

## BIOGRAPHY

The writer, Reby Cary, was born September 9, 1920 to Rev. and Mrs. S. Cary of Ft. Worth, Texas.

His elementary training was received from the James E. Guinn Elementary School, Ft. Worth, Texas, and was graduated from the I. M. Terrell High School of the same city, June, 1937.

He matriculated at Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College in September, 1937, received a Bachelor of Arts degree in history in 1941, and enrolled in the graduate school of that institution in September, 1941.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  | Page |
|--|------|
| Acknowledgment .....   | iii  |
| Dedication .....   | iv   |
| Biography .....  | v    |
| Chapter  |      |
| I. Introduction .....  | 1    |
| A. Purpose .....   | 1    |
| B. Limitation and Scope .....  | 2    |
| C. Methods of Procedure .....  | 3    |
| D. Hypothesis .....  | 5    |
| E. Definition of Terms .....   | 6    |
| II. General Background .....   | 8    |
| III. Consciousness .....   | 17   |
| IV. Leadership .....   | 31   |
| V. Discipline .....  | 37   |
| VI. Summary and Conclusion .....   | 44   |
| Bibliography .....   | 46   |
| Appendix I. Organizational Chart of Houston<br>Negro Chamber of Commerce ..... | 50   |
| Appendix II. Letter .....  | 55   |



## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

## LIST OF TABLES

| Table   | Page |
|---|------|
| I. Survey of Negro Businesses Made by Dallas and Houston Negro Chambers of Commerce ..... | 26   |



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Purpose

The American Negro is becoming more organization conscious with each succeeding generation. A large number of organizations are founded as a means of protest against certain evils which the Negro believes should be combatted through group activity. Others are formed for social, religious, political, or economic improvement and have become a distinct and component part of our American heritage. However, it is interesting to note how the Negro has patterned certain organizations after those of whites and merely prefixed or suffixed the name of the group or organization with the word "Negro." It is with this "imitated" phase of institutional organization that we take cognizance of the events and conditions instrumental in the development of the Negro chamber of commerce movement in Texas.

There is a direct relationship between the transition of certain factions or elements of our population, and the development and expansion of businesses which in turn creates an atmosphere for the emergence of a chamber of commerce. The desires, aspirations, and previous experiences of migrants moving into a new community add to the cultural, institutional, and economic development of any city. Consequently, this "new Negro" moving into the larger cities of Texas with a zeal to improve his conditions economically, educationally, and politically undertook through organization, the realization of his needs and



ambitions. He was not accepted as an integral part of the white organizations, so he aped the white chambers of commerce and other civic organizations which in many instances are endorsed and encouraged by the white chambers of commerce in his city.

This study purports to interpret the development of the Negro chamber of commerce movement in Texas by;

- (1) Analyzing the consciousness of the group who comprise the membership of the Negro chamber of commerce movement in Texas.
- (2) Discussing the leadership which has evolved from the chamber of commerce movement.
- (3) Ascertaining the value of the Negro chamber of commerce value in relationship to the discipline within the group.

With the foregoing objectives in mind, I have set myself to the task of presenting a comprehensive analysis of the Negro chamber of commerce movement in Texas.

#### Limitation and Scope

At the outset of this investigation of the Negro chamber of commerce movement, it was decided that a study of several chambers, instead of analyzing one organization, would prove more valuable and would provide a substantial basis for logical and reliable conclusions. Thus, I have included in this study Negro chambers of commerce in both large and small cities throughout Texas.



Only those organizations bearing the names of "chamber of commerce" were included for study in order to be consistent and not overlapping in an analysis of other business organizations that may be similar in their objectives and functions.<sup>1</sup>

And too, this study has been limited to a portion of the total Negro chambers of commerce in Texas because of the lack of original records and the non-existence of these groups as functioning units. A large number of Negro chambers of commerce in Texas have had ephemeral existences that have been sporadic from their very beginnings. The reasons for their failures present a significant and challenging corrective formula for the success of future Negro chambers of commerce in Texas and other cities throughout the United States.

### C. Methods of Procedure

A preliminary survey of the compiled data, studies, and investigations that have been made on the Negro chambers of commerce in Texas revealed that an open field for research on this subject exists for scholars who are interested in an organizational analysis. As far as could be determined only two studies prior to this study have been made. One by Lemmon McMillian, "An Economic Study of the Negro Chamber of Commerce of Dallas, Texas," and the other by Virginia Strange, "The Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce."

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<sup>1</sup>Business Leagues, Business and Professional Men's Clubs, Trade Associations, etc.



In the acquisition of information, the problem was thoroughly analyzed and two questionnaires were drawn up accordingly.<sup>2</sup> These schedules, accompanied by explanatory letters, were sent to the various Negro chambers of commerce in Texas informing them of the study being made and soliciting their co-operation.

Schedule one is a three page form designed to analyze the structural organization of the chambers of commerce and trace the origins, objectives, and accomplishments of these bodies. This questionnaire was completed by an officer or some member who had a thorough knowledge of the development of the organization.

Schedule two is calculated to obtain insight as to the status, character and interests of those persons who form a component part of the memberships of the various chambers.

To facilitate a direct and primary observation of the chambers and their compositions as they now exist, as many visits as possible were made to the chamber seats and personal interviews with persons affiliated with those organizations.

For the general background and other related information necessary to this study, the facilities of the Ft. Worth Public Library, Dunbar Library of Dallas, Texas, and the Prairie View A. and M. College libraries were utilized.

The formula used for measuring and interpreting the

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<sup>2</sup>See appendix for copies of questionnaires.



Negro chamber of commerce movement in Texas was based on the following:

- (1) Consciousness of group identity.
- (2) Leadership.
- (3) Discipline.

#### D. Hypothesis

The chambers of commerce in the United States represent a composite body of business men who directly or indirectly regulate the conduct and activities of their communities. These are the men who shape and formulate the local, state, and national community policies.

Members of this "entrepreneur cell" occupy positions and memberships in every important movement or organization in their particular locales. As such, they have consolidated these varied interests and influences into a centralized, organized group, which we have defined as a chamber of commerce. From this center flows the expression of the people as determined by the business men.

A consistent influx of Negroes from rural areas has introduced a "new Negro" to urban communities who brings with him new ideas, aspirations, and customs. This increasing Negro population in urban centers has facilitated the establishment of diversified economic institutions which are made necessary because of the segregated economy in which they must move and because the whites fail to extend or provide adequate service institutions for these Negroes. As a result, businesses among Negroes have sprung up and



increased, which have not been accepted into the overall white chambers of commerce.

Consequently, Negroes have organized parallelistic associations and groups which are patterned after the white chambers of commerce in their organizational structure. Nevertheless, the Negro chambers of commerce fail to command the same position as the whites do in their community in relation to representing the "hub" from which affairs of Negroes are determined and regulated. But it represents a pressure group which has not for its main purpose, the stimulation of business but the improvement of civic and racial conditions throughout the Negro community.

#### B. Definition of Terms

The following terms are frequently used throughout this thesis and for clarification as to their meaning and usage are hereby defined:

##### 1. Chamber of Commerce:

An association of business men for the protection, regulation, and promotion of the commerce of a city.

##### 2. New Negro:

The new progressive types of Negroes who are moving to urban communities with ideas and views that reflect a desire to become integrated into the whole of America's various economies by active participation and an elevation from the status quo.

##### 3. Rurals:

The farm population and all the non-farm

population living in places of less than 2,500 population.<sup>3</sup>

#### 4. Urban:

Cities having a population of more than 2,500 and characterized by an enormous industrial development.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>United States Bureau of the Census, 1930.

<sup>4</sup>Noel P. Gist, Urban Society, (Thomas Y. Crowell Co., New York, 1945) p. 7. Prior to 1910 the United States Bureau of Census classified as urban all agglomerated areas of 8,000 population and over.



## CHAPTER II

## GENERAL BACKGROUND

The development of the chamber of commerce movement in the United States is best reflected in the rapid urban developments which were stimulated by population movements. Whenever we find a large city, we almost inevitably find at the center of its business activities a proportionate chamber of commerce unit which represents an amalgamation and cross-section of its economic life. The smaller the town the smaller the chamber of commerce as an organization; consequently, the rapid influx of rural laborers to any urban community has a direct bearing on the growth and development of economic institutions within the spheres of influence of these urban centers. It seems logical then that a discussion of the general trends of migration from rural areas to the cities is significant as a contributing cause for the expansion of business and as a background for this study.

Many writers have endeavored to ascertain the many centrifugal and centripetal forces which put this population movement into motion in the decades between 1900 and 1930.<sup>1</sup> However, the causes need not be expounded in lengthy details because we are primarily interested in the effects of this migratory phenomenon as it relates itself to the

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<sup>1</sup>One of the best sources for population movement to the urban areas is found in Arna Bontemps, They Seek a City, (Doubleday Doran, New York, 1945).



growth of industries and cities and in turn to the underlying factors which primarily necessitated or gave rise to the organizations of various businesses.

Of general significance to establishing a background for this study are the factors involved and the status of business as to make a chamber of commerce necessary. The Industrial Revolution gives us a sufficient background as it gained momentum and made entrepreneurs, in many similar and dissimilar occupations, conscious of the need for working together as a unit in order that they may protect themselves, command the markets, regulate prices, and crush all competition. Thus, beginning in 1860, we see the rise of large mergers and combinations over smaller combinations and their accelerated growth and power in the decades that followed.

The primary aims of these groups seemed to have been monopolistic in their trends and scope, and many scholars and laymen have watched the interlocking trust movements, pools, and syndicates as they produced radical and revolutionary changes to American economic institutions. Once more, freedom of enterprise was being threatened. This time by a small group of trusts and other combination business men who were most affected by these combinations began to raise opposition to these monopolistic practices until Congress passed the Anti-Trust laws making it a federal offense to form associations for the purpose of monopolizing and restraining trade.

Nevertheless, these experiences of coping with the



"trust" practices had profound effects on business men. "The trusts had dramatized the advantages of massed and centrally directed economic power."<sup>2</sup> The National Association of Manufacturers in 1895 then took the forefront with the theory that it is better for business men to cooperate together by "unifying, coordinating, and more effectively focusing policies relating to the business system as a whole."<sup>3</sup>

Notwithstanding the fact that prior to 1895 many cities had established Boards of Trade, and in 1868 the National Board of Trade was organized, the National Association of Manufacturers can be called the "mother" of associations as it set the precedent and stimulation for the organization of the chamber of commerce of the United States.

With this timely move, this country emerged on an era of organization which culminated into a general chamber of commerce movement, or business groups designed to develop, encourage, and promote the core of American capitalistic system, business.

This pattern of organization has found its way into the Negro community but with an increasing loss of identity due to the appended functions attached to its normal and intended program. This change can possibly be attributed

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<sup>2</sup>Robert A. Brody, Business as a System of Power, (Columbia Press, New York, 1943) p. 190.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 191.



to the varied interests seeking a recognized outlet through an "all-round" organization.

A brief study of the effects of Negro rural migration on the development and growth of businesses in our cities and the many problems that have arisen as a result of their entry therein will be made.

A fairly good statistical estimation has been made by various writers and the United States Bureau of the Census as to the movement and shift of the rural population to urban communities. These studies have been essential to scholars in that they are able to watch the inevitable economic and social consequences of large scale migrations which confronts the Negro as he transfer from one locale to another. These movements have been occurring at a steady and consistent rate as "communication, travel, and knowledge of other opportunities,"<sup>4</sup> have pervaded rural areas. This tendency to get away from the country and go to the city has increased with each succeeding decade.

This new labor supply for urban districts was largely comprised of common laborers and those persons who were tired of the existing pattern of "farm life tenancy." The

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<sup>4</sup>L. V. Kennedy, The Negro Peasant Turns Cityward, (Columbia Press, New York, 1930) p. 36.

Edmund de S. Brunner, Rural Social Trends, (McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., New York, 1933) p. 1.



epidemic of boll weevils<sup>6</sup> played havoc with the Southern Negro farmers and served as a "push" to send them trampling to the cities in large numbers. Paul K. Edwards describing the movement wrote:

In the thirty years between 1900 and 1930 the urban Negro population increased by more than three million; the rural population decreased by 134,000. The movement to the city became more definite and rapid during each succeeding decade of this thirty year period. Between 1910 and 1920 the urban population increased by 875,000 while the rural decreased by 240,000. Between 1920 and 1930 the urban population increased by 1,600,000, the rural population decreased by 206,000.<sup>8</sup>

While the statistics stated above gives us a general picture of the shifting of population from rural to urban areas throughout the United States, an analysis of what the situation has been in Texas will be our area of concentration for this study.

According to population statistics in Texas,<sup>7</sup> urbanism has developed rapidly in this state. "In 1870 only 6.7 per cent of Texas population was urban. By the end of the century it had grown to 17.1 per cent. It was 32.4 per cent in 1920, 41 in 1930, and 45.4 in 1940 . . . . it is estimated that more than a half million people shifted from the rural to urban scenes in Texas during the five year

<sup>6</sup>"Negro Migrations and Migrants," Monthly Labor Review, (January, 1922) pp. 42-43.

Edward E. Lewis, The Mobility of the Negro, (Columbia University Press, 1931) pp. 13, 115-116. Lewis concentrates this study on the economic causes for Negro migration from the rurals to the urban cities and traces in a chronological pattern the history of the spread of the boll weevil over the cotton Belt in relationship to disorganization of farm life and causes for migration.

<sup>7</sup>Paul K. Edwards, The Southern Urban Negro as a Consumer, (Prentice Hall, New York, 1932) p. 1.

<sup>8</sup>Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide, 1945-46.



period 1940-1944, inclusive. At the end of 1944, fully 52 or 53 per cent of the civilian population was urban." The overall results of mass movement by Negroes to urban cities have in some cases solved past problems confronting them in the rurals, and have increased in intensity and variations many new problems in the cities. With the Negro endeavoring to adjust himself from an agricultural economy to that of an industrial setting, and with the many social, economic and political problems he must face, it will be interesting to see how this new type of Negro coming to the city will be able to assimilate himself and endeavor to solve his problems through social and economic organizations, as reflected in the chamber of commerce movement.

The establishment of the National Negro Business League played a significant part in the development and organizational scheme of Negro, economic improvement institutions throughout the United States. The founding of such an organization was due largely to the profound thinking and works of the eminent educator, Booker T. Washington.<sup>8</sup> As he traveled the country and studied the economic conditions of the Negro people, he sensed a deep need for a clear-cut analysis of their status and possible solutions for the alleviation or mitigation of their varied problems.

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<sup>8</sup>M. S. Stuart, "An Economic Detour" (Wendell Mollinet and Co., New York, 1940) p. 173.

"The Great Need of Negroes in Business," The Journal of Negro Business, October, 1947, p. 3. Vol. II.

See correspondence in appendix dated June 17, 1948 from Nattie Tillman, Secretary to A. G. Gaston, President of National Negro Business League.



Along this line of thinking he deemed it expedient that he call together the leading Negro men then engaged in successful business pursuits and to discuss pertinent problems which, by offering feasible solutions, would enhance the growth and development of their individual businesses.

Booker T. Washington describes the formation of the National Negro Business League as follows:

In the summer of 1900, with the assistance of such prominent coloured men as Mr. T. Fortune, who has always upheld my hand in every effort, I organized the National Negro Business League, which held its first meeting in Boston, and brought together for the first time a large number of the coloured men who are engaged in various lines of trade or business in different parts of the United States. Thirty states were represented at our first meeting. Out of this national meeting grew state and local business leagues.

The purpose of the Business League from the outset was the promotion of industrial "commercial" achievement, whereby the influence of the race could be increased and enabled to maintain a position of influence in the American economy and eventually obtain economic freedom.

However, "in terms of its influence on economic betterment of the Negro, the National Negro Business League has been inconsequential as a factor in shaping the psychology and thinking of Negroes. Nevertheless, it has been vastly important . . . . it has pursued the narrowest type of racial chauvinism, for it has organized not business,

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<sup>a</sup>Booker T. Washington, Up From Slavery (Sun Dial Press, Inc., New York, 1937) p. 316.



but Negro business and has employed the racial situation as its main stock in trade in bidding for the support of Negro patronage."<sup>10</sup>

The league serves in the capacity of a national center for local business leagues, Negro chambers of commerce and similar organizations of Negro business and professional men and women. During the course of the three-day meeting held annually, informal business "life histories" are given by the members in which they are given by the members in which they trace the origin, development, and present status of the business with which they are identified. This is the procedure which the league uses in the stimulation and promotion of business among Negroes.

An increase in the number of Negro businesses, since the founding of the National Negro Business League has been noticed as a result of several surveys. In 1915, figures showed that "Negro business enterprises had increased from 20,000, since 1900, to 45,000. In the first ten years of the organization's existence the United States census returns showed an increase of 177 per cent."<sup>11</sup>

Thus, as Negroes continued to leave the rurals and go to the cities, and as businesses began to develop and grow, offsprings of the first National Negro Business

<sup>10</sup>Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma, Vol. II, (Harper and Bros., New York, ) p. 815.

I do not agree wholly with Myrdal on this point. The league has had a profound effect on small businesses as a stimulator and guide for Negro enterprises.

<sup>11</sup>Frederick E. Drinken, Booker T. Washington, (Griffith Art Co., New York, 1915) p. 119.



League in the form of chambers of commerce and similar bodies sprung up all over the United States and especially Texas which forms the setting for this particular study.

### CHAPTER III

### CONSCIOUSNESS

In order to gauge or lay a premises whereby character might be given to the development of the Negro chamber of commerce movement in Texas, the following criteria and re-statement of the hypothesis has been utilized for this study and analysis:

The chamber of commerce as an organization is composed of individuals who are conscious of their identity as a distinct group of business men having the common interests of protection within their ranks and the promotion, development and encouragement of business throughout their respective areas.

The desire to promulgate and enhance the economic institutions of these entrepreneurs and the association of these persons together in an organization with singleness of purpose, produces a leadership which plays an important part in formulating and determining the discipline within the group.

Thus the chamber of commerce movement in the United States has been fostered through the ingenuity of business men who are endeavoring to further the cause of their group through the promotion of more business. A common and distinct characteristic of this association of men is that they are all commonly engaged in a business or profession, which carries with it pays for services rendered. However, allowance is made for the civic influence in the chamber, but it is not the dominating program, instead the main emphasis is centered around business.



But when an analysis is made of the Negro chambers of commerce and their development, a variation in the whole pattern is noted as far as this "commonness," in relation to the composition of the membership, and in connection with the objectives and programs of action instituted within these units. In most cases this body has received its frame work and initial assistance from the white chambers of commerce.<sup>1</sup> Lemmon McMillian<sup>2</sup> justifies the use of the white chamber of commerce as a model for organization, because the Negro founders recognize the experience, position, effect, and relationship of that body to the industrial, social, and economic activities of the various cities throughout Texas. Nevertheless, in spite of the guidance given Negro citizens by the consulted group,

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<sup>1</sup>In an interview with Professor T. W. Pratt of Dallas, April 20, 1948, he tells of the "invaluable assistance" given them by the white chamber of commerce in the organizational planning for the Negro group. M. J. Norvell, then secretary of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce was delegated to assist in the planning along with N. R. Brown, who was connected with the Magnolia Oil Company.

Navasota and Grimes county chamber of commerce was instrumental in outlining plans for organizing a Negro chamber of commerce in 1946. (Recorded in terview with Professor J. C. Madison of Navasota, June 12, 1948).

See appendix for correspondence dated June 24, 1948 from J. E. Bell, Executive Vice-President of Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce: "This organization did endorse and assist the organization of the Negro chamber of commerce in Corpus Christi."

<sup>2</sup>Lemmon McMillian, An Economic Study of the Negro Chamber of Commerce of Dallas, Texas. (Unpublished manuscript Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College, 1939) p. 21.



there was not the element of a group of Negro men who were engaged in some particular business and whose interests are purportedly mutual. Consequently, as will be noted later, the objectives and programs do not reflect a movement designed by and for business interests, but an alliance of leaders who have varied interests at heart and are endeavoring to protrude them through the chamber of commerce as their clearing house.

The program of the National Negro Business League and the objectives it sets forth,<sup>5</sup> reveals a true group consciousness in light of the fact that its membership and program was composed of, and designed for, individuals who had business interests; but the Negro chamber of commerce as it developed, changed this mutual identity by bringing in a diversified element which has altered the program of the chamber of commerce. This change portrays a hybrid organization which is evolving into a civic pressure group.

The history of the Negro chamber of commerce of Dallas is significant in that it represents the establishment of the first Negro chamber of commerce in Texas, and a change in the common identity from a business group with a business developmental program to a group which would

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<sup>5</sup>The National Negro Business League (The Guide Publishing Co., Norfolk, Virginia, 1927) p. 3.

The objects listed shows that the League endeavors:

(1) Coordinate local business activities for improved service, co-operative buying, united advertising efforts and protection; (2) to serve as a medium of contact between its business men and the great financiers and commercial organizations of other groups in the country, (3) through local, district, and national meetings provide information and exchanged ideas for strengthening existing business enterprises.



represent the interests of all the people and on all matters and issues which effected their lines.

This transition of the Dallas Negro chamber of commerce, which is typical of other chambers included in this study, had a peculiar and familiar setting in a dispute between two factions as to who would represent the Negro business men of Dallas at the 1926 Convention of the National Negro Business League in Chicago, Illinois.<sup>4</sup> The difference arose between Lawyer Wells and Professor T. W. Pratt. By a vote of the body then in session, Professor Pratt won the privilege of being the delegate to the convention by a 2 to 1 vote. But, because of the lack of finance in the treasury, Lawyer Wells elected to represent the Business League of Dallas at his own expense. This widened the gap of disharmony within the Dallas League's ranks, and on November 26, 1926, Professor T. W. Pratt summoned a group of men together and accordingly organized the first Negro chamber of commerce in Texas. The significant factor in this change is that the founders, in setting up this new organization, thought the league too conservative in its scope and activity. "They wanted something more dynamic, and they did not think the League had reached a cross-section of all the citizens well enough. While the

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<sup>4</sup>Recorded Interview with Professor T. W. Pratt, April 20, 1948. He is one of the founders of the Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce.



organization included only business and professional men, the proposed Negro chamber of commerce would go out to reach everyone."<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the Negro chamber of commerce movement assumed a new role and altered its objectives to the extent that it no longer is recognizable as a unit of control for business but a focal point of control of the wheel of civic development and improvement. The question then arises "why has the chamber of commerce lost its identity as soon as it is patterned by Negroes?" One significant answer is the growth of racial consciousness and desire for improvement among Negroes which must depend on a limited amount of leadership within the Negro community. Where there exists a variety of community problems to be solved by a group, the so-called leaders are affiliated with, and hold offices in several other organizations which have similar and dissimilar objectives and problems.<sup>6</sup> This pattern is not

<sup>5</sup>Recorded Interview with Professor T. W. Pratt, April 20, 1948. The Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce in a bulletin entitled What it is all About, defends this overall inclusion by stating: "We all are in the same boat. We started late. We have been shut off from the basic knowledge of how to become self sustaining. We are so far behind in this matter of managing money we spend that it will take the combined efforts of all of us to catch up." The Harrison County Negro Chamber of Commerce "Solicits the membership of every Negro who believes in co-operative efforts for the public good. (1) In Hitchcock Negro Chamber of Commerce prerequisite for membership is a law-abiding, civic-minded citizen. (2) Montgomery County Negro Chamber of Commerce, any Negro citizen. (3) Any person friendly toward objectives of chamber of the city of Ft. Worth may become a member. <sup>6</sup>Health, sanitation, inadequate recreational facilities, improperly paved and lighted streets, etc.



unusual within the white group; but the process of infiltration and affiliation is reversed. The white business men associate themselves together in the chamber of commerce and then project themselves into other important community organizations. The Negro, on the other hand, are aligned with other civic, social, religious, and political group and then infiltrate into the Negro chamber of commerce. It seems odd, and it is a significant observation, that with all the older established organizations such as N. A. A. C. P.; Urban League, our churches, the leaders of today selected the Chamber of Commerce as the clearing house and dominating influence in the community. This is an indication that community leadership is gradually leaving the teachers and ministers and emerging out of the business man.

In Texas it is a fact that the roster of the officers of the Negro chambers of commerce hold offices in the local civic organizations of their respective cities such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Urban League, Commission on Interracial Cooperation and other protest and civic improvement organization. Take for example, the N. A. A. C. P. which represents one of the Negro's most potent weapons against the American caste system. The organization is an interracial movement designed to win full equality for the Negro as a citizen.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>The objective of the N. A. A. C. P. include: Anti-lynch legislation; enfranchisement of the Negro in the South; abolish criminal procedure based on color or race; equitable distribution of funds for public education; etc.



As the N. A. A. C. P., the Urban League is an inter-racial movement whose primary task is job opportunity for Negroes, but it, too, has extended its program to include all phases of social work.

After analyzing briefly the programs of the various organizations in the urban centers in Texas and the areas of interests in which they are directed, then it is not likely that persons affiliated with the Negro chambers of commerce endeavoring to cover all of the fields of community activity will be able to concentrate and specialize in the fields of industrial and commercial development as the unit is originally designed to do. The persons for whom the chamber is designed is dwarfed in the organization and other professionals (teachers, doctors, etc.) play the dominant roles and thereby emphasize their interests. E. Franklin Frazier lays the blame for this omission of the group, for which any organization is designed to help, on the leaders. He writes: "I recall that in one city where they attempted to organize a worker's council they invited only professional people and neglected the more intelligent and more articulate members of the working class. As I was invited to the meeting, I pointed out this defect but still the leaders insisted upon getting the professional class or educated people."<sup>8</sup>

This has been the pattern and composition of the

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<sup>8</sup>Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma, (Harper and Brothers, Publishers, New York, 1944) p. 841.



chamber of commerce movement in Texas and one of the basic reasons for the loss in identity of this organization.

Perhaps the general economic status of the Negro community is not conducive to the creation of a business consciousness among Negroes. Generally speaking, business in America has been defined as an organized effort on the part of man to satisfy his wants "through the utilization of social resources such as natural resources, human labor, capital and acquired knowledge."<sup>9</sup> But, as an analysis of Negro business is considered, the fact is obvious that the Negro is impeded by his social environment and this definition becomes a pseudo definition by reasons of its limitations.

As an increasing number of Negroes and migrating and concentrating in urban communities, this group enters a specialized and industrial economy which they, as agricultural and unskilled laborers, find barred and stratified into separate occupational, economic, and social classes. Residential segregation follows. This pattern of segregation has placed a rigid limitation on the development of Negro business.

As a results, Negro business becomes for the most part, solely dependent upon Negroes for its existence having its sphere of influence in the isolated Negro community.

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<sup>9</sup>Leverett S. Lyon, Education for Business (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1931) p. 24.



This framework in which the Negro is compelled to operate is a serious restriction on the opportunities for the development and expansion of his business.

There are many other factors involved which tend to keep Negro business down and the most important is "the lack of finance and credit. It is also partly due to prejudiced opinion among whites concerning the business ability and personal reliability of Negroes. In either case a vicious circle is in operation keeping Negro business down."<sup>10</sup> As in other larger and more densely Negro populated states, Negroes in Texas have developed relatively few businesses and those that they are engaged in are largely service institutions. Table one is a survey of Negro business in two of Texas' largest cities, Houston and Dallas, and is based on surveys made by the Negro chambers of commerce of those two cities, and on records in their respective offices. As the table indicates the majority of Negro businesses are restaurants, cafes, barbecue stands, groceries, beauty shops, and barber shops, cleaners, and pressers, and an increasing number of liquor stores. These businesses all fall within the small business category.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma (Harper and Brothers, Publishers, New York, 1944) p. 308.

<sup>11</sup>Joseph A. Pierce, Negro Business and Business Education (Harper and Brothers, New York, 1947) p. 5-- has suggested that the "upper limits for small enterprises be set at 250 workers employed, \$250,000 in value of assets used, \$100,000 in net worth or \$1,000,000 in business volume."



TABLE I

SURVEY OF NEGRO BUSINESSES MADE BY THE DALLAS AND HOUSTON  
CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

| Type of Business                | Number in<br>Dallas | Number in<br>Houston |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Groceries                       | 90                  | 282                  |
| Candy factory                   |                     | 1                    |
| Cabinet shop                    |                     | 1                    |
| Foundry                         |                     | 1                    |
| Music shop                      |                     | 1                    |
| Funeral homes                   | 17                  | 12                   |
| Riding stables                  |                     | 1                    |
| Beauty shops                    | 88                  | 95                   |
| Barber shops                    | 22                  | 70                   |
| Millinery                       | 1                   | 1                    |
| Ice houses                      | 6                   | 6                    |
| Auto laundry                    |                     | 1                    |
| Restaurants, cafe, and Barbecue | 250                 | 271                  |
| Tire and Battery shop           |                     | 1                    |
| Furniture Company and Repair    |                     | 1                    |
| Service Station and Garages     | 11                  | 47                   |
| Gift shop                       |                     | 4                    |
| Variety stores                  | 5                   | 6                    |
| Wood yards                      | 6                   | 1                    |
| Fish and poultry houses         | 1                   | 16                   |
| Transfer and Baggage Company    |                     | 1                    |
| Confectionary                   |                     | 32                   |
| Construction Company            | 1                   | 1                    |
| Shoe Repair shops               | 8                   | 22                   |
| Pastry shop                     | 2                   | 22                   |
| Meat markets                    |                     | 1                    |
| Blacksmiths                     |                     | 1                    |
| Ice cream parlors               | 7                   | 38                   |
| Cleaners and Pressers           | 22                  | 77                   |
| Boarding house                  |                     | 1                    |
| Shine parlors                   | 12                  | 20                   |
| Liquor stores                   | 50                  | 34                   |
| Night clubs                     | 2                   | 12                   |
| Radio shops                     | 8                   | 15                   |
| News stand                      |                     | 1                    |
| Recreation centers              | 5                   | 7                    |
| Flower nursery                  |                     | 1                    |
| Florists                        | 6                   | 10                   |
| Grain distributors              | 2                   | 2                    |
| Junk Supply Company             |                     | 1                    |
| Bag Company                     |                     | 2                    |
| Photographers                   | 7                   | 3                    |
| Drugs                           | 11                  | 24                   |
| Laundry and washaterias         | 8                   | 13                   |



TABLE I (Continued)

| Type of Business                          | Number in<br>Dallas | Number in<br>Houston |
|---|---------------------|----------------------|
| Electrical appliances                     | 2                   | 5                    |
| Printing shops                            | 3                   | 3                    |
| Record shops                              | 4                   | 14                   |
| Tailor shops                              | 11                  | 5                    |
| Taxi cab company                          | 4                   | 12                   |
| Optometrist                               | 1                   | 1                    |
| Hat shop                                  | 1                   | 1                    |
| Bicycle shop                              |                     | 2                    |
| Department store, dress and sport<br>shop | 5                   | 3                    |
| Realtors                                  | 9                   | 5                    |
| Jewelers                                  | 2                   | 2                    |
| Accountants                               | 4                   |                      |
| Attorneys                                 | 4                   |                      |
| Caterers                                  | 2                   |                      |
| Clinics                                   | 3                   |                      |
| Private schools                           | 17                  |                      |
| Dentists                                  | 7                   |                      |
| Employment agencies                       | 5                   |                      |
| Fertilizer and gravel company             | 1                   |                      |
| Hotels                                    | 13                  |                      |
| Insurances                                | 28                  |                      |
| Newspaper                                 | 1                   |                      |
| Notary Public                             | 10                  |                      |
| Physician and Surgeons                    | 18                  |                      |
| Seamstresses                              | 47                  |                      |
| Theaters                                  | 6                   |                      |
| Travel bureaus                            | 2                   |                      |
| Window cleaners                           | 1                   |                      |
| Office buildings                          | 10                  |                      |
| Mixogalist                                | 1                   |                      |
| Plumbers                                  | 2                   |                      |
| Architect                                 | 1                   |                      |

Consequently the scarcity of Negro business limits the field and possibility for a representative number to be interested in a chamber of commerce movement. Out of the total number of Negro businesses in Houston, which is approximately 2,500, one hundred and four were listed as being members of the chamber of commerce. In Dallas, 78 businesses out of an approximately 1,100 establishments



were listed as members of the Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce. This is a clear indication that there is not too much consciousness on the part of Negro business men in a movement designed to improve their status. Then, who comprises the Negro chamber of commerce membership? In analyzing the occupations of the members of the Dallas Negro chamber of commerce the following non-business persons and organizations were classified as chamber of commerce members.<sup>12</sup>

|                                    |     |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Social workers                     | 5   |
| Ministers                          | 37  |
| Walters                            | 14  |
| Farmers                            | 1   |
| Musicians                          | 4   |
| Fraternities                       | 3   |
| Lodges                             | 4   |
| Common laborers                    | 210 |
| Nurses                             | 6   |
| Housewives                         | 59  |
| Teachers                           | 148 |
| Salesmen                           | 13  |
| Clubs and Civic organizations      | 7   |
| Labor unions                       | 2   |
| Policemen                          | 2   |
| Postal Employees                   | 16  |
| Occupation not specified           | 490 |
| Social agencies and administrators | 8   |

According to the statistics above, only 390 members of the reported 1,500 members for 1948 can be identified as a true chamber of commerce member because of their business affiliations. This means that the consciousness in this

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<sup>12</sup>This information was tabulated from the 1948 membership cards in the Dallas Negro chamber of commerce.



group will evolve around 1,110 varied interests which represent everything but business.

Out of the 3,000 memberships of the Houston Negro Chamber of Commerce, only 104 were businesses and the remaining 2,996 represented interests other than business. According to the Negro chamber of commerce records, 41 churches, three labor unions, ushers unions, Elk clubs, and other civic and fraternal organizations, housewives, teachers, domestic and common laborers comprised the bulk of the chamber membership.

If Houston and Dallas, being the largest cities in Texas, can be used as a criterion or example of Negro businesses and their proportionate participation in a chamber of commerce movement, then the dominance and high ratio of non-business elements in these organizations denote the lack of a business consciousness, but a civic or racial consciousness which represents the majority of its members. This fact will be shown in the chapter on discipline within the Negro chamber of commerce movement.

It is evident that a high degree of class consciousness exists on the part of those who are exponents of the Negro chambers of commerce. The numerous boarding houses, pool halls, after-hour taverns, houses of prostitution, and those persons engaged in various businesses which operate within the realm of the law are shunned. In one case during this investigation the question of "how many of these individuals" we have just mentioned were members of the chamber of commerce, and the information was whispered that



only a few and that was for the financial campaign. It seems as if the best business men from the point of view of showing profits is not included in this chamber. This is perhaps due to a hypocritical social ethics, which is a direct product of the tight religious mores of a rural locality so recently abandoned by the "city" Negro.

of its members. A leader normally arises within a group of which he is a member and the interrelationship between him and the group are built around some common interest. In most instances in this study, the leadership has been exercised by individuals who have been active in the community and have been active in the community for the ideas inherent in the chambers of commerce programs and have rallied about them a group of men and women who constituted and created stronger pressure groups for the furthering of their ideas.

Primarily this leadership which is reflected in the creation of Negro chambers of commerce in Texas is a fruit of the racial idealism which is permeating various segments of Negro life, and these idealistic leaders have sensed the need for an all purpose organization to improve the social, economic, and political conditions in their community.

In Dallas, September 18, 1933, Professor F. V. Prather pioneered the first Negro chamber of commerce in Dallas and Texas, because he wanted an organization that would not only be valuable to the people in business, but would be a



## CHAPTER IV

## LEADERSHIP

The second phase of the development of the Negro chamber of commerce movement in Texas can be analyzed in the emergence of leadership out of the group consciousness of its members. "A leader normally arises within a group of which he is a member and the interrelationship between him and the group are built around some common interest."<sup>1</sup> In most instances in this study, the leadership has been creative in that individuals have been the impellent forces for the ideas inherent in the chambers of commerce programs and have rallied about them a group of men and women who constituted and created stronger pressure groups for the furthering of their ideas.

Primarily this leadership which is reflected in the creation of Negro chambers of commerce in Texas is a fruit of the racial idealism which is permeating various segments of Negro life, and these so-called leaders have sensed the need for an all purpose organization to improve the social, economic, and political conditions in their community.

In Dallas, November 16, 1926, Professor T. W. Pratt pioneered the first Negro chamber of commerce to Dallas and Texas, because he wanted an organization that would not only be valuable to the people in business, but would be a

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<sup>1</sup>Elmer Pendell, Society Under Analysis, (The Jacques Cattell Press, Lancaster, Pa., 1942) pp. 52-53.



mecca for all the citizens as it sought to perpetuate their varied interests. As a result, in the true spirit of creative leadership he summoned several outstanding persons of the city together and formed a nucleus for the present unit which is still functioning in Dallas. E. J. Crawford, owner of a leading funeral home, was chosen president by the assembled group and thus under his guidance the Negro chamber of commerce was launched.

From 1926 to 1933, the Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce struggled for survival as a community clearing house for Negro problems but in 1933 the organization brought to its rank a leader who re-activated and made this unit span all opposition and competition by other elements and produced the most progressive and dominating chamber in Texas.

Consequently on January 1, 1933, A. Maceo Smith, organizer of Western Mutual Life Insurance Company "re-organized the Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce and placed it on a sound financial basis with a full time paid executive staff and a permanent program."<sup>2</sup>

This re-activating leadership, as exemplified by A. Maceo Smith is a general racial phenomenon which is found to be true and necessary in most of the Negro chambers of commerce in Texas because of the instability of these units.

Houston, having no Negro organization which was strong enough to represent and assist in the economic uplifting of its Negro citizens, found in the formation of a

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<sup>2</sup>Negro City Directory. 1941-42, (Dallas, Texas) p.



chamber of commerce organization a leader in the person of J. E. Robinson who was a member of the Noon-Day Luncheon Club.

The Noon-Day Luncheon Club was composed of a group of business men who met once a week to discuss problems common to all of them. But as in most groups which heretofore have endeavored to represent the Negro business men, the interest dwained and the unit was dissolved.

Mr. Robinson felt that some organization was needed to stimulate the economic consciousness of the Negro citizens<sup>3</sup> so he initiated a meeting for that purpose and became the leader responsible for the founding of the Houston Negro Chamber of Commerce. However, the first year was not dominated by any outstanding achievement but merely "moulded public opinion as to the purpose and status of such an organization in the community."<sup>4</sup>

The need for a person to make the Houston Negro Chamber of Commerce a dynamic and prominent organization was recognized and its members found the answer in Ollie King Manning. "While working with the Universal Life Insurance Company and with other business interests of the city, he saw need of a co-ordinating agency . . . . under his leadership as executive secretary, the Houston Negro Chamber of Commerce became nationally known."<sup>5</sup> Because of the fine qualities of leadership possessed by Ollie K.

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<sup>3</sup>Recorded Interview with J. E. Robinson, Houston, Texas, June 14, 1948.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>The Journal of Negro Business (October, 1947) p. 6.



Manning, he was elected Executive Secretary of the National Negro Business League. He died October 10, 1947.

Nevertheless, individual creative leadership has played the dominant role in the development of the Negro chamber of commerce movement in Texas and will be found serving as the motivating stimuli behind all such organizations having as its medium, the secretary-manager who pilots the chamber of commerce.

Another phase of leadership which is very significant to the chamber of commerce movement is that leadership which is inspired by the white chambers. In several instances white chambers have brought the idea to the Negro groups.

Joe S. Moore, manager of the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce writes:

This organization does endorse the Negro Chamber of Commerce in Conroe. Some three years ago Mr. Fred Yates, who was then manager, affected the organization of the Negro chamber of commerce, feeling that this Negro group needed a vehicle to promote civic pride and improvements.<sup>6</sup>

In Navasota, a representative of the East Texas (white) chamber of commerce was sent to encourage the setting up of a Negro chamber of commerce.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup>A letter in answer to a questionnaire, June 29, 1948.

<sup>7</sup>Recorded Interview, Professor J. C. Madison, June 18, 1948:

Owen R. Smith, Manager of Navasota and Grimes counties Chamber of Commerce writes in a letter dated June 23, 1948; "the chamber of commerce was instrumental in helping the colored citizens get their present chamber organized . . . it is the only civic organization by which the colored business leaders and other colored citizens can analyze and solve their community problems."



Most Negro chambers of commerce have been aided by the white groups and find that the latter is very eager to do so and heartily endorses the programs of the former. At the present, a Negro chamber of commerce does not exist in Port Arthur but the white chamber "does endorse a Negro chamber of commerce because a body acting as a unit can speak for the people . . . . and would assist them in any manner if such a group was formed."<sup>8</sup>

After analyzing the Negro's dominantly civic programs and the subsequent endorsements and encouragements on the part of the white group; the question arises as to the nature of their co-operation: Are the white groups eager for the Negro to keep his mind on civic improvements and not concentrate on business and commercial enterprises?

However, with the composition of the leaders pioneering in the chamber of commerce movement, it is easy to see how and why that group leads toward civic and non-business affairs.

In Ft. Worth during the organization of the present Negro chamber of commerce, the idea was carried out by a dean of an industrial college, a registrar of the same college, an agricultural demonstration agent, a social worker, a representative of an insurance company, and an owner of a cleaning and pressing establishment.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Letter from Port Arthur Chamber of Commerce, dated June 30, 1948.

<sup>9</sup>From Minutes of the Ft. Worth Negro Chamber of Commerce, dated May 30, 1946.



Navasota's Negro Chamber of Commerce was originally organized by a minister, county agricultural agent, a common laborer, and a school teacher.<sup>10</sup>

The Montgomery County Negro Chamber of Commerce was established by two ministers, a farmer, and a teacher.<sup>11</sup>

Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce was organized by a teacher, two funeral directors, and a physician; and in Houston that organization was perfected by a realtor, the physician, common laborer, and a publisher.

Thus, the majority of the chambers of commerce organizations established by Negroes have stemmed from persons whose interests were possibly dominated by civic interests and not that of business as shall be pointed out in the interpretation of the objectives and achievements of the units included in this study.

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<sup>10</sup>Recorded Interview with Professor J. C. Madison, Navasota, Texas, June 18, 1948.

<sup>11</sup>Questionnaire received from Ira B. Scott, secretary of that organization.



## CHAPTER V

### DISCIPLINE

The development of the Negro chamber of commerce movement in Texas and the evolutionary loss of its identity as a unit for industrial and commercial development can best be interpreted on the basis of the discipline formulated within the organization. This discipline is a resultant factor of the consciousness of the group and the leadership thereby developed. The discipline inherent in the Negro chamber of commerce movement in Texas can be analyzed from the viewpoints of organizational structure and the objectives and programs of activity.

At the outset of this study it was indicated that the chamber of commerce is new to Negroes and it was necessary for them to receive assistance from the white groups to duplicate their pattern for organization. It is to be noted that since the Dallas Negro chamber of commerce has been organized, it has furthered the spirit and program of the National Negro Business League and assisted other cities in establishing local units throughout Texas. A. Maceo Smith who has served as president of the Texas Negro chamber of commerce authorized A. W. Brashear to aid in organizing other chamber of commerce units throughout Texas.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix for circular letter sent by A. Maceo Smith, April 30, 1946, "To whom it may concern." He organized the Texas Negro chambers of commerce in 1937 and was its president for seven years.



But in most cases consultation and assistance has been given by the white groups who endorsed the Negro movement in their cities and gave them the information as to the functions and framework of a chamber of commerce.<sup>3</sup>

Most Negro chambers follow a similar pattern in organization which is designed primarily for the discipline within the group. The elective officers are usually a president, vice-president, secretary-manager, treasurer, legal advisor, chaplain, and sometimes auditor.

Special committees will vary according to the size, need, and programs of the particular unit. There are usually standing committees on: membership, publicity, education, employment, finance, constitution, recreation, public relations, and civic welfare. The organization chart in appendix is a sample of the framework of the Houston Negro Chamber of Commerce which typifies the organizational structure of the Negro chambers of commerce in Texas. Basically the organizational pattern is the same as that of the whites, but a glaring variation is noted in the objectives and programs of the Negro chambers of commerce as they project themselves into the community program.

These objectives of the Negro chambers of commerce are significant in that they indicate the composition of the chamber membership based on the purposes stated and the general program, and a reflection of the interests of those

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<sup>3</sup>See appendix for letters from white chambers of commerce.



who are its members. In every chamber studied, civic, and racial improvement tends to be the dominant program of the Negro chambers and business represents a secondary objective which seems to be the ultimate goals as indicated by their programs and not an immediate goal. Nevertheless, the objectives set forth by the divergent Negro chambers of commerce possibly could be attributed to the sudden growth and development of racial pride. Moreover, because Negro business men do not constitute a part of the white chambers of commerce, they must create a parallel unit which will have its variation according to the desired patterns. Consequently, we observe objectives and goals that are dominantly civic in scope and does not follow a pattern of industrial commercial and economic development.

The Harrison County Negro Chamber of Commerce is a good example of the foregoing statement.

It was established in 1935, for the purpose of stimulating a closer co-operation among the people it represents and for providing a medium through which the aspirations and needs of the Negro population of the city and county could be properly interpreted and correlated with the larger plans and programs of the community for civic betterment in its various aspects--educational, religious, economic, and social . . . .<sup>s</sup>

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<sup>s</sup>Synopsis of the organization, accomplishments, and objectives of the Harrison County Negro Chamber of Commerce:

See appendix for copy of letter, dated June 25, 1948, from Oscar Jones, Manager of the Marshall Chamber of Commerce, in which he states that: "We have a good Negro Chamber of Commerce here, well organized with officers and directors who are interested in the welfare of this community and have the proper attitude and proper approach for a constructive program which has a tendency to make Marshall a better community for our Negro people, as well as those of other races."



Their accomplishments for the years 1935-1937 were:

1. Promoted sale of fair tickets among our group in 1936 and 1937,
2. Sponsored banquet for the new residents to our community.
3. Sponsored picnic for 1,000 Harrison and Marion County farmers by raising \$128.00.
4. Provided \$5.00 prize money given Mrs. Beulah Davenport for the first bale of cotton, 1937.
5. Gave two students trip to Prairie View for study (N. Y. A.)
6. Sponsored a bigger and better Negro Business Week in 1935.
7. Presented desk set to Dr. Dogan on his fortieth anniversary.
8. Assisted in County Relief work during 1936.
9. Endorsed and assisted in \$5,000 endowment campaign for Wiley.
10. Assisted in opening new avenues of employment for Negroes.
11. Sponsored Boy Scout movement for our group in Harrison and adjoining counties.
12. Assisted in securing improved heating system in Central High School . . . .<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 2.



From the foregoing objectives and achievements of the Harrison County Negro Chamber of Commerce, it is readily evident that this organization which typifies other Negro chambers of commerce has allowed itself to become engulfed by civic responsibilities and functions of other organizations and is endeavoring to become the clearing house for all matters of this nature. Industrial and commercial improvement efforts are at a minimum. This is in direct contrast to the white chambers who represent homogeneous groups of business men. The parent chambers of our cities are ever cognizant of needed civic improvements, but their control and participation in these endeavors are relative to business interests. But this racial consciousness on the part of Negro leaders which overshadows the desired business consciousness is reflected more in communities where Negro businesses are few and where there are relatively few influential community improvement organizations functioning. Note the preamble to the Marion County Negro Chamber of Commerce's constitution:

We, the Negro citizens of the city of Jefferson and the county of Marion, desiring to improve the civic, economic, religious, and educational status of our race and community; and sensing the need of a better understanding among the members of our social and racial groups as a basis for constructive group action in the achievement of that worthy purpose, do hereby establish the Marion County Negro Chamber of Commerce.

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<sup>6</sup>This constitution was presented to the chamber on June 20, 1945 by Harold Odom, agricultural agent, who was the secretary.



In Ft. Worth, the Negro chamber of commerce patterning after the Dallas and Houston Negro chambers of commerce adopted a program: "To foster, develop, and perpetuate civic and racial pride and interracial goodwill and to encourage national participation in all matters calculated to enhance the progress of the Negro of America. . . ."<sup>6</sup>

Besides a series of banquets, the Ft. Worth Chamber of Commerce has not been a potent force in the Ft. Worth community. However, it did perfect the organization of a Retail Grocers Association<sup>7</sup> which is a unit of the chamber of commerce. This group represents a true grocerman's association in that every member in that auxiliary is a grocerman and each has a common interest. This association has overshadowed the chamber of commerce in co-operation and achievements by members of that group.

During the observation of the twelfth anniversary of the Houston Negro Chamber of Commerce, the organization "dedicates itself to the task of stimulating closer co-operation among race citizens of Houston and Harris counties, and provide a medium through which the aspiration and needs of the Negro population might be properly interpreted and correlated with necessary planning and programs of the community, for civic betterment in its various aspects,

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<sup>6</sup>Purpose stated on charter granted by the State of Texas, September 8, 1946.

<sup>7</sup>"The Voice of a City," Applause, February, 1947, p. 34.



educational, religious, economic, and social."<sup>8</sup>

The chamber also emphasizes its objectives in business and industry, religion, education, housing, health, recreation, employment, civic and welfare.

All of these extensive programs instituted by the various Negro chambers of commerce throughout Texas are illustrative of the fact that the chambers of commerce as adopted by Negroes are too inclusive in scope and are steadily losing that identity as they become characterized by too many other dominant activities. This is important, that while a chamber of commerce can bring within its scope various civic activities, it loses its identity when it allows these things to dominate the business elements and indulge in a wide range of community programs.

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<sup>8</sup>Programme; Houston Negro Chamber of Commerce, April 9, 1948 at Antioch Baptist Church, Houston, Texas.



## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Negro chamber of commerce movement has evolved from a growing civic and racial consciousness on the part of Negro citizens in various communities. This consciousness has needed expression through a new and dynamic organization which can be the spokesman and watchdog for the Negro community. The chamber of commerce was selected as a model because an awareness exists in the community that the white chamber of commerce is the hub from which the affairs of the community are determined and regulated. Consequently, Negro leaders witnessing the shifting influence of leadership from the teachers and ministers to business and professional men, projected themselves into this growing and vital mechanism of community life. For this reason leadership has sprung from all phases of community life which contributes to the changing character of the chamber of commerce movement.

The white chambers of commerce are composed of business men, but the Negro leaders have transformed those units from organizations whose primary aims are business, to a variety of aims which are dominantly civic and racial. Thus, the unit becomes a civic-pressure group which has altered and changed the intended chamber of commerce until the two groups are alike in name only.

The diversified composition of the membership, the non-business leaders in the movement, and the resultant program of activity, clearly indicates that the Negro



chamber of commerce is a pseudo-chamber of commerce. The Negro chamber of commerce movement will be a true and effective one only when the leadership and discipline emanates from a common identity of business men, and the process of infiltration into community life is from within this nucleus. Due to the fact the process has been reversed, there exists a Negro chamber of commerce composed of an agglomeration of personalities and interests.



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**APPENDIX**



Full Name of Chamber \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

1. NUMBER OF YEARS CHAMBER HAS BEEN ORGANIZED TO DATE \_\_\_\_\_

2. Date organized \_\_\_\_\_

3. Is organization incorporated? \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Incorporation \_\_\_\_\_  
yes or no

4. If not incorporated, state manager of organization and the date thereof \_\_\_\_\_

5. Who conceived idea of organizing chamber? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

6. Is the organization the outgrowth or continuation of any form of predecessor? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ If so, state the name of such predecessor and the period during which it was in existence. \_\_\_\_\_  
Yes or no

7. List incorporators of original Chamber of Commerce

Occupational  
Pursuit \_\_\_\_\_

| Name | Address | Occupational Pursuit |
|------|---------|----------------------|
| a.   |         |                      |
| b.   |         |                      |
| c.   |         |                      |
| d.   |         |                      |
| e.   |         |                      |
| f.   |         |                      |

8. What were the original objectives of the Chamber of Commerce

|    |    |
|----|----|
| a. | d. |
| b. | e. |
| c. | f. |



10. List objectives and achievements of your organization by years

| Year | No. of Members | Objectives | Achievements |
|------|----------------|------------|--------------|
|      |                |            |              |

notes: If more space needed attach sheet on back:

11. Are you affiliated with the Texas State Chamber of Commerce or National Negro Business League? \_\_\_\_\_. If yes indicate what Organization \_\_\_\_\_. How many years has your organization been affiliated with that body? \_\_\_\_\_. If not, why? \_\_\_\_\_

12. Do you coordinate your activities with your local White Chamber of Commerce?

\_\_\_\_\_ . If yes, specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
yes or no

a. What businesses have your organization caused to be established in your city?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address



13. List present Roster of Officers:

| Name | Address | Business engaged in | Length of residence in city |
|------|---------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
|      |         |                     |                             |
|      |         |                     |                             |
|      |         |                     |                             |
|      |         |                     |                             |
|      |         |                     |                             |
|      |         |                     |                             |
|      |         |                     |                             |
|      |         |                     |                             |
|      |         |                     |                             |

14. What are the qualifications necessary to membership in your organization?

15. Are most of your members persons who have business establishments? \_\_\_\_\_  
What percent? \_\_\_\_\_

16. State all sources from which income is derived to support your Chamber of Commerce\*\*\*\*

17. Does your organization participate in local, State and National politics?  
If yes, how and in what respect?

If no, Why?

18. In what occupations are most of the Negroes in your city employed?

19. Please forward me all printed data or classified information you know relative to organization, objective and achievements of your organization.

Signature







## Schedule # 2 continued:

16. What influenced you to become amember of your local Chamber of Commerce?
17. List other organizations you are a member of:

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Prairie View A. and M. College  
Room 123 Foster Hall  
June 20, 1948  
Hempstead, Texas

To Whom it May Concern:

Your Chamber of Commerce and its relationship to the Negro Chamber of Commerce Movement in your city is being analyzed in my Master's Thesis which I am endeavoring to complete by July 1, 1948.

I shall be very grateful to you if you will answer the following questions and return the information to me immediately:

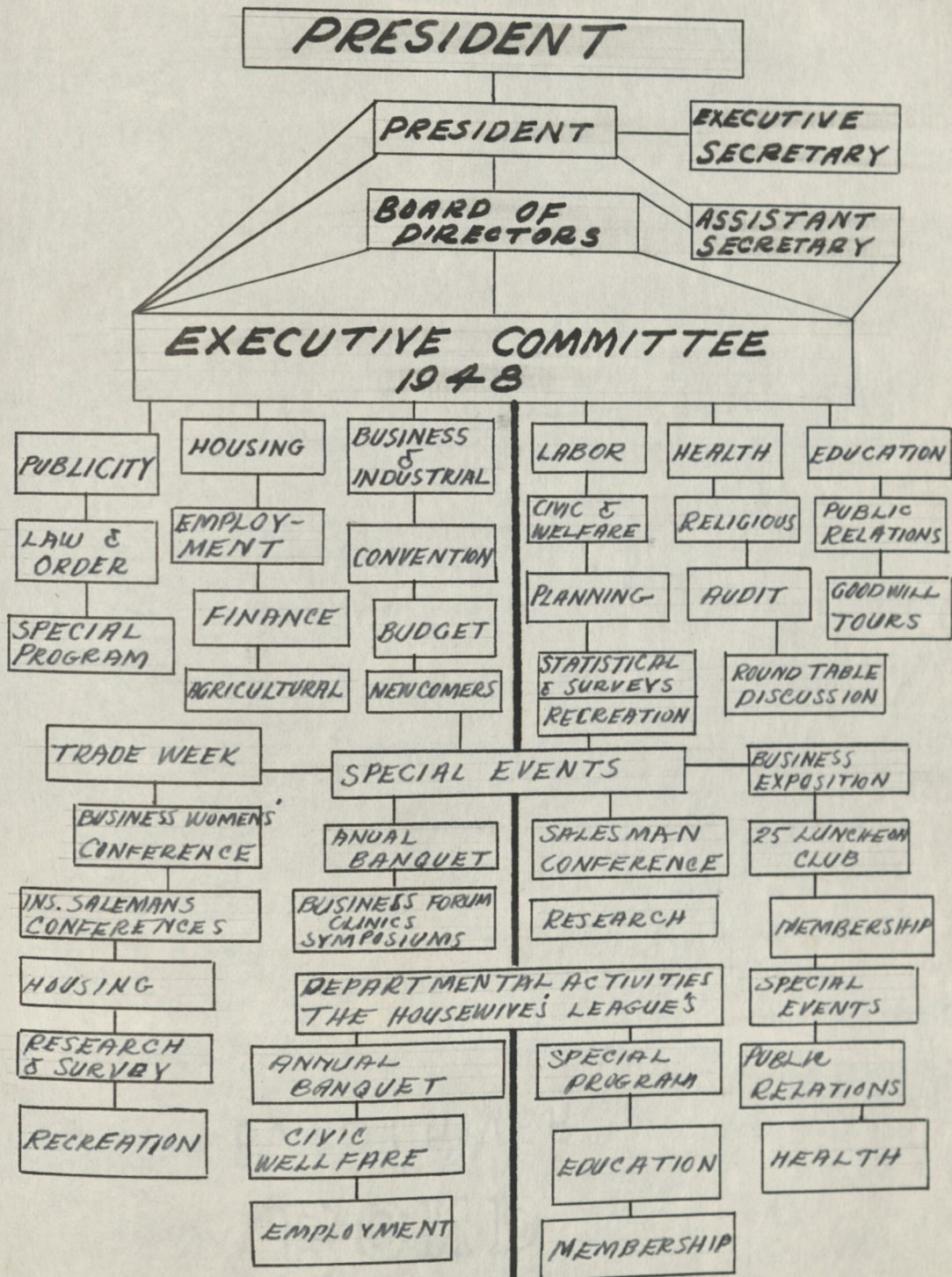
1. Does your organization endorse the Negro Chamber of Commerce in your city? If yes, why? If no, why?
2. What intrinsic value, in your opinion, does the Negro Chamber of Commerce have in your community?
3. In what respect is your Chamber of Commerce working with the Negro Chamber of Commerce?  
(Include finance, furnishing, and other information).

I thank you for your consideration and assistance.

Very truly yours,  
(Signed) Reby Cary



# ORGANIZATIONAL CHART OF HOUSTON NEGRO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE





# CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

COMMERCE BUILDING

HOUSTON 1, TEXAS

P. O. BOX 2371

June 24, 1948

Mr. Reby Cary  
Room 123, Foster Hall  
Prairie View A. & M. College  
Hempstead, Texas

Dear Mr. Cary:

We appreciate your letter of June 20th and are interested in the study you are making in your Master's Thesis of the Chamber of Commerce and its relationship to the Negro Chamber of Commerce movement. Our comments will follow the order of the three points which you have raised.

1. Our organization most heartily endorses the Negro Chamber of Commerce in Houston. It represents a very important segment of the business life of our community, and its objectives within its sphere of influence is comparable to ours. Both organizations are working toward the general goal of community improvement and development.

2. The Negro Chamber of Commerce provides an organization through which the business and professional interests among the Negro population of Houston can work together to solve common problems and to capitalize on common opportunities. It stimulates a greater sense of civic pride and a greater sense of civic pride and a greater feeling of civic responsibility among its members and within the interests they represent.

3. Our organization cooperates with the Negro Chamber of Commerce in Houston in every possible way. While we have no direct financial connection with that organization, we give them support and encouragement whenever possible. Information assembled by our organization is available to the Negro Chamber of Commerce, and the counsel of the specialists on our staff is available to them at all times. Members of our staff meet with them when they consider it would be helpful to them in their program.

If we can be of further assistance to you in your project, please feel free to call upon us.

Very truly yours,

*Maurice H. H. H.*

Secretary



MILLARD COPE, FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT  
WILLARD COKER, SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT

O. H. CLARK, PRESIDENT  
F. S. MCGEE, TREASURER

OSCAR B. JONES, MANAGER  
ANNA M. COOK, SECRETARY

# MARSHALL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



*Marshall, Texas*

June 25, 1948

## DIRECTORS

RICHARD W. BLALOCK  
A. G. CARTER, SR.  
O. H. CLARK  
WILLARD COKER  
MILLARD COPE  
E. H. DENNARD  
J. P. DUNCAN  
CHARLES A. FRY  
A. D. KERR  
D. A. LAIRD  
CAMERON MCELROY  
F. S. MCGEE  
JACK S. MANN  
ROY MARCOM  
W. L. SMITH  
DUDLEY TAYLOR  
R. M. WILLIAMS  
S. E. WOOD, JR.  
WM. F. YOUNG

Reby Cary  
Room 123, Foster Hall  
Prarie View A & M College  
Hempstead, Texas

Cary:

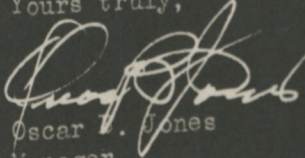
We have your mimeographed letter of June 20 in which you ask certain questions in regard to our Negro Chamber of Commerce, stating that you are seeking information to be used in your Master's Thesis. We will give you some information confined to and in line with the questions you ask.

We have a good Negro Chamber of Commerce here, well organized with officers and directors who are interested in the welfare of this community and have the proper attitude and proper approach for a constructive program which has a tendency to make Marshall a better community for our Negro people, as well as those of other races.

Our organization certainly endorses the Negro Chamber of Commerce and confers with many of their committies in an effort to assist in a constructive program.

We think the Negro Chamber of Commerce is very definitely a valuable organization in the community. In fact, with as many Negro people as we have in Marshall, we don't see how it could operate without a good sound Chamber of Commerce. You realize the Chamber of Commerce is a community clearing house for all the people's problems which are no one particular person's problem.

Yours truly,

  
Oscar B. Jones  
Manager

CC to  
G. C. Stephens, President  
Negro Chamber of Commerce  
Marshall, Texas



# The Corpus Christi

## DIRECTORS

BYRD HARRIS  
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ROBERT M. JACKSON  
BRUCE REAGAN  
ROBERT E. SALLEE  
ROBERT J. SECHRIST  
E. B. SHELLENBERGER  
J. R. SORRELL  
GUY I. WARREN  
SAM E. WILSON, JR.



TOM GRAHAM, PRESIDENT  
JACK DeFORREST, 1ST VICE-PRES.  
ENNIS JOSLIN, 2ND VICE-PRES.  
JAMES S. CARLTON, TREAS.  
J. E. BELL, EXECUTIVE VICE-PRES.

## CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS

June 24, 1948

Mr. Reby Cary,  
Room 123 Foster Hall,  
Prairie View A&M College,  
Hempstead, Texas.

Dear Mr. Cary:

In answer to your letter of June 20th, in the order  
of the questions asked:

1. This organization did endorse and assist  
the organization of the Negro Chamber of  
Commerce in Corpus Christi.

I made the talk at their inaugural meeting a number of  
years ago and offered them the co-operation and assistance  
of this organization, complimented them on their organiza-  
tion since I believe that it was a very important and neces-  
sary adjunct in the civic development of our city. The negro  
has played a very definite part in the development of our  
city.

2. The Negro Chamber of Commerce in this city  
has been of material value in carrying for-  
ward various civic projects, including cam-  
paigns for the sale of war bonds, clean-up  
campaigns and various other community wide  
civic projects.
3. Our co-operation with the Negro Chamber of  
Commerce has been for the most part moral  
support and co-operation in their housing  
problems, the furnishing of such information  
as they requested and we have at times as-  
sisted them financially in entertaining  
negro conventions and celebrations.

I hope this will give you the information desired

Yours very truly,

J. E. BELL, Executive Vice Pres.



NAVASOTA AND GRIMES COUNTY  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

NAVASOTA, TEXAS

June 23, 1948

Reby Carey  
Prairie View A. & M. College  
Hempstead, Texas

Dear Reby:

We are glad to cooperate with you by supplying the following information:

1. Yes. It is the only civic organization by which the colored business leaders and other colored citizens can analyze and solve their community problems.
2. It accomplishes the results sought in the answer to Question 1.
3. Advisory capacity, - the Chamber of Commerce was instrumental in helping the colored citizens get their present Chamber organized.

Yours truly,

*Owen R. Smith*

Owen R. Smith  
Manager

ORS:kb



# Texas Negro Chamber of Commerce

EXECUTIVE OFFICES

2011 North Washington Avenue

DALLAS 4, TEXAS

April 30, 1946


To Whom It May Concern:

This is to certify that Mr A W Brashear of Dallas, Texas is a duly authorized representative of the Texas Negro Chamber of Commerce and is empowered to aid in the establishment of local units in the state.

Requisites to the establishment of local Negro chambers of commerce are (1) the application for charter in the National Negro Business League at the cost of ten dollars (\$10) and (2) application for and payment of at least five (5) regular memberships in the National Negro Business League at a copy of three dollars (\$3) each.

The development and promotion of Negro business enterprises are best served through the establishment of a community collective mind. All local communities throughout the state are urged to cooperate in the program of the Texas Negro Chamber of Commerce and the National Negro Business League so that economic emancipation of Negroes might be soon affected.

Sincerely yours,

  
A Maceo Smith  
President

Amarillo  
Austin  
Bastrop  
Bonham  
Bryan  
Conroe  
Corsicana  
Corpus Christi  
Dallas  
Denison  
El Paso  
Ennis  
Fort Worth  
Gainesville  
Galveston  
Gladewater  
Greenville  
Henderson  
Houston  
Jacksonville  
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Longview  
Lubbock  
Lufkin  
Marshall  
McKinney  
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Mt. Pleasant  
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Palestine  
Paris  
Port Arthur  
San Antonio  
Schulenburg  
Sherman  
Shreveport, La.  
Sulphur Springs  
Temple  
Taylor  
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Trinity  
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Wichita Falls

AFFILIATED WITH: NATIONAL NEGRO BUSINESS LEAGUE



# The National Negro Business League

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A. G. NELSON, KANSAS CITY, MO.

## ORGANIZED 1900

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON, FOUNDER AND FIRST PRESIDENT

## OBJECT

TO PROMOTE THE COMMERCIAL AND FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEGRO

## OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

A. G. GASTON

POSTOFFICE BOX 2621

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

June 17, 1948

Mr. Reby Cary  
Prairie View A & M College  
Rm. 123 Foster Hall  
Hempstead, Texas

Dear Mr. Cary:

Your letter of June 14, 1948 addressed to Mr. Gaston and asking him to give you the history of the National Negro Business League, arrived to find him out of the city. In his absence, I shall give you the few details of the history available in his office. I would suggest that you write Mr. Albion L. Holsey, Honorary Vice President of the business league at Tuskegee Institute, Alabama for a more complete history.

The National Negro Business League was founded in 1900 by Booker T. Washington. Its object is to promote the commercial and financial development of the Negro. At present there are approximately 150 local units located in 24 states of the United States. The present officers and board of directors you will find listed on the stationery. I am enclosing a copy of the Work Day Program of the league and the Constitution and By-Laws which may be of service to you.

Several organizations have grown out of the National Negro Business League, including the National Negro Insurance Association, National Negro Funeral Directors Association, and recently the National Association of Real Estate Brokers. These are a few of the organizations who have the National Negro Business League as their parent body.

Hoping this information will be of help to you, I am

Yours very truly,

*Mattie Tillman*

Secretary to Mr. Gaston.



